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MARX'S THEORY, THE CRISIS AND THE ABOLITION OF CAPITALISM

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In this 2010 interview, Robert Kurz discusses Marx's theory of crisis, the theories of "collapse" advocated by a minority of Marxists (Luxemburg, Grossman, Mattick) in the early 1900s, the implications of the "third industrial revolution of microelectronics" for capitalist accumulation, Moishe Postone's analysis of the crisis of abstract labor, "anti-industrialism" and the anti-growth movement (Décroissants), and the meaning of "labor" as a historical and economic concept that must be transcended and replaced by "conscious social planning" and a "broad diversification of industrial production and services, implemented in accordance with purely qualitative criteria".

What makes this crisis different from the previous ones?

Capitalism is not the eternal cyclic return of the same, but a dynamic historical process. Each great crisis takes place at a higher level of accumulation and productivity than the previous ones. Therefore, the question of whether or not the crisis can be overcome is always posed in a new way. The recovery mechanisms previously employed are no longer valid. The crises of the 19th century were overcome because capitalism had not yet spread to affect all of social reproduction. There still remained an internal space open to industrial development. The world economic crisis of the 1930s was a structural rupture at a very high level of industrialization. It was overcome by way of the new Fordist industries and by Keynesian regulation, whose prototypes were the war economies of the Second World War. When Fordist accumulation encountered its limits in the 1970s, Keynesianism culminated in an inflationary policy based on public credit. The so-called neoliberal revolution, however, merely shifted the problem of public credit over to the financial markets. The background was a new structural rupture of capitalist development, marked by the third industrial revolution of microelectronics. At this qualitatively different level of productivity it was no longer possible to set in motion any terrain of real accumulation. This is why, over a period lasting several decades, based on indebtedness and on the insubstantial financial markets, a global economic conjuncture arose that was based on deficit financing, which could not be sustained over the long term. The entire neoliberal era of deregulation was accompanied by a

historically unprecedented series of financial and debt crises. Insofar as these crises were limited to certain regions or sectors they could be contained by a flood of money from the central banks. This only paved the way, however, to a culmination of the crisis process. Since the autumn of 2008, the crisis of the third industrial revolution has assumed a global dimension. The surfeit of the financial markets now only indicates the lack of real accumulation. The new crisis Keynesianism, however, only once again shifts the problem from the financial markets to public credit mechanisms, but this time at a much higher level than in the decade of the 1970s. The State is just as incapable now of compensating for the lack of real accumulation over the long term. The crisis of the financial markets is replaced by the crisis of public finance; Greece is only the tip of the iceberg, to take a contemporary example. The forced and unimaginative shifting of the problem back into the hands of the State shows that at the present time there are no new mechanisms for resolving the crisis at the currently attained level of productivity.

You have said that capitalism is approaching its end. Are we, for the first time in history, facing the possibility of going beyond capitalism? Did capitalism have to develop its internal contradictions to this point in order for this to be possible? Was it not possible before?

The blind dynamic of capitalism unfolds according to its own internal laws. This process, however, is only "necessary" and, up to a certain point, determined, to the extent that the basic categories and criteria of this mode of production and of life are not challenged in practice. With adequate intervention, capitalism could have been interrupted at any of the stages of its development. In that case, the socialization of production would have taken a different course, concerning which we cannot say anything because this did not actually take place. It is not a question of objective necessity, but a question of critical consciousness. Neither the revolts of the 18th century and the early 19th century, nor the old workers movement, nor even the new social movements of the last few decades, were capable of producing such a consciousness. To the contrary, the capitalist forms of abstract labor, the valorization of value and the modern State were increasingly more deeply internalized. This was only the case in terms of what actually happened, however. Therefore, capitalism did not "have to" develop its internal contradictions up to the point they have reached today, but that is exactly what it did. Now we are confronted with the task of reformulating the critique of capitalist forms and the program for their abolition, at the currently attained level of capitalism's contradictions. This is simply our historical situation, and it is useless to regret the lost battles of the past. Although capitalism is objectively coming up against its absolute historical limit, emancipation can only fail today due to a lack of sufficient critical consciousness. Then the result would not be a new springtime for accumulation, but, as Marx said, an eventual collective collapse into barbarism.

According to the critique of value (in Marx's theory) the value-price connection passes through an endless number of mediations. This connection is extremely flexible. So, how can we say that capital has reached its immanent limit?

The forms of mediation of value and price are not infinite in number, they form a succession of generally discernable stages, whose regulator is competition. The number of individual transactions, on the other hand, is what can be characterized as almost infinite. But that is another matter. Due to the large number of empirical transactions, at all the levels of commodity-capital, of money-capital and of credit, which are also only inadequately represented by bourgeois statistics, the situation of real valorization can never be precisely determined. There is always a certain tension between theory and empiricism. Nonetheless, the theory of observable phenomena can be set in relation to the essential internal process of valorization. For the connection between the mediations of value and price is very complex, but it is by no means infinitely flexible. The movement of competition in billions of individual transactions is related to the mass of real value of all of society, which cannot be directly empirically determined. This mass of real value is linked, according to Marx, to the substance of abstract labor, that is, to the mass of abstract human energy utilized in the functional space of capital. Capital, on the other hand, cannot arbitrarily use as much labor power as it wants, but only the quantity that is in conformity with the prevailing standard of productivity, which is in turn imposed by competition. The intermediate forms between value and price are therefore not arbitrarily flexible; their flexibility is limited by the real quantity of the social substance on which they are based. It is, however, always only *ex post facto* that it is empirically verified whether the social relations of value-price are substantially adjusted or if they are just so much hot air. It is precisely as a result of this situation that we are experiencing the current crisis. It can thus be proven in practice that the idea of an infinite flexibility of prices in relation to the substance of value is nothing but a vast illusion.

You read Marx's theory of crisis as a theory of collapse, a theory based on the idea of the underproduction of capital. Other Marxists (Grossman, Mattick) advocated the same reading, but this critique was always supported by a tiny minority. The Marxists – regardless of their other differences – always read and still read Marx's theory as a theory of the unequal distribution of wealth (an unequal distribution whose origin lay in speculation, deregulation, in the search for super-profits in financial markets) and reject the theory of collapse. Are both readings of Marx justified by Marx himself? Is there a double Marx?

The term "collapse" is metaphorical and suggestive. It was used by Eduard Bernstein, without any theoretical reflection, in order to completely discredit Marx's crisis theory, based on the impact of empirical capitalist development at the end of the 19th century. The term appears in the so-called "fragment on machines" in the *Grundrisse*, with which neither Bernstein nor his opponents were familiar, because the *Grundrisse* was only published much later. In the third volume of *Capital*, Marx speaks precisely of an "immanent limit of capital" that would end up becoming absolute. The arguments of the early "theories of collapse" of Rosa Luxemburg and Henryk Grossman, which were supported by a minority among Marxists, were based either on the insufficient "realization" of surplus-value (Luxemburg), or on an "overaccumulation" of capital (Grossman) that cannot find adequate outlets for investment. Paul Mattick, at an early stage, distanced himself from the theory of an immanent objective limit of capital; like the

Leninists, he identified the "collapse" with the political action of the proletariat. In Marx, there are two different levels of the theory of crisis, which are not theoretically unified. The first level refers to the contradictions of the circulation of capital: the disparity between supply and demand, as well as the disproportionality of this relation among the various sectors of production. The second level, in the *Grundrisse* and in the third volume of *Capital*, refers much more fundamentally to the relation between productivity and the conditions of valorization, that is, to the lack of production of surplus-value that renders too much labor power superfluous. Only the contradictions in the sphere of circulation play a role in Marxist crisis theories; the question of the lack of the real substance of labor was not the object of any debate. In the third industrial revolution, however, only the second, more profound level of Marx's crisis theory became relevant. The real "desubstantialization" of capital is so advanced that only an apparent insubstantial accumulation is possible, by way of financial markets and public credit, which is currently coming up against its limits. What is taking place now is not the unequal distribution of "abstract wealth" (Marx), but the liberation of concrete wealth from the fetishism of capital and from its abstract forms. Most contemporary Marxists, however, have regressed even below the level attained by the previous crisis theories and limit themselves to assuming the classical petty bourgeois point of view of a critique of "finance capital". They confuse cause and effect: they reduce the crisis not to an objective lack of real production of value, but to the subjective profits of the speculators. The capitalist mode of production is no longer criticized at its roots; all they want to do is to return to the Fordist configuration of abstract labor. This option is not only illusory; it is also reactionary. It possesses a structural similarity with the economic ideology of anti-semitism.

You and Moishe Postone, whose book, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*, has been published in French translation, elaborate two types of value critique that diverge on an essential point. For you, with the advances in productivity capital loses substance (abstract labor) and, in the third industrial revolution of microelectronics, this substance is lost completely by capital. For Postone, on the other hand, the advances in productivity cause value to increase – temporarily. After the productivity gains are generalized, the increase in value is nullified, regressing to the basic unit of abstract labor (working time) for its initial level. Thus, for you value is dissolving, whereas for Postone value is incessantly expanding, so as to later return to its starting point. Here is my question: does this not undermine the plausibility of value critique? Or should we perceive this as a temporary stage?

The point I share in common with Postone is the critique of the concept of labor held by traditional Marxism. The traditional understanding transforms the concept of abstract labor, which in Marx is purely negative, critical and historical, into a positivist definition, by reinterpreting it as an eternal condition of humanity. What is lacking in Postone, however, is the dimension of crisis theory in the critique of abstract labor; with regard to this question he still has a traditional view. The increase of productivity means that less human energy produces more material products. Therefore, productivity never increases value, but always diminishes it, as Marx demonstrated in the first volume of *Capital*. Anyone who claims the contrary confuses the social level with the level of the economy of each entrepreneur, or the totality of capital with individual capital. The individual capital that first increases its own productivity in isolation from its competitors achieves an advantage over its competition. It can offer its individual products at a cheaper price, and thus succeeds in selling more commodities and, precisely for that very reason, realizes for itself a greater part of the social mass of value. What appears from the point of view of the economy of the individual entrepreneur as growing profits and therefore as a growing "creation of value" leads socially, however, to the diminution of value, and indeed to the detriment of the other individual capitals. If the productivity gains are generalized, the innovating individual capital loses its advantage over the competition. This by no means, however, represents a return to zero or to a previous starting point. To the contrary, the increased productivity now becomes the new general standard. An hour of labor, as the basic unit of abstract labor, is always the same, since it cannot by any means have different "levels". The new, higher standard of productivity, however, causes fewer of these always-equal hours of abstract labor to be necessary for an increasing mass of products. If capital is devalued and destroyed in the crisis, the already-attained level of productivity nevertheless remains, because it is inscribed in the totality of knowledge and know-how. We have to be clear about this: capitalism cannot go back from the level of microelectronics to the level of the steam engine. A new increase of value is becoming ever more difficult in the face of increasingly higher levels of productivity and, consequently, with an always diminishing substance of abstract labor. In the past, the constant reduction of value was only relative. With the increase of the standards of productivity, the individual product can represent ever less abstract labor and, therefore, ever less value. Nonetheless, thanks to their lower prices, ever more goods that were previously considered to be luxury goods enter into mass consumption, enlarging production and expanding markets. The relative reduction of the social substance of value in each individual product can therefore only lead to an absolute increase of the total mass of social value, because the enlarged social production as a whole mobilizes more abstract labor than is rendered superfluous in the manufacture of each individual product. This is accomplished with the mechanism that Marx called the production of "relative surplus-value". The same process which continuously reduces the aliquot part of labor power that produces value in capital as a whole, also reduces, together with the value of the necessary food for the reproduction of this labor power, the value of labor power itself and therefore increases the aliquot part of surplus-value in the total production of value. This only applies to individual labor power, however. In order to ascertain the social quantity of value and of surplus-value, what is decisive is the relation between the increase of relative surplus-value by individual labor power and the amount of labor power that can be socially utilized in conformity with the prevailing standard of productivity. In the fragment on machines in the *Grundrisse* and in the third volume of *Capital*, Marx notes that the increase of productivity must logically reach a point where more abstract labor will be expelled from the production process than can be further set to work only by the expansion of markets and of production. Then, too, the increase of relative surplus-value by the individual worker will not increase at all, because the total number of usable workers undergoes a steep decline. It can be demonstrated that this point that was

abstractly anticipated by Marx has been reached historically and concretely with the third industrial revolution. Capital is therefore not capable of mobilizing enough abstract labor on the basis of its own productive foundations, and thus increasing the production of real value, instead of having to subsidize it on an unprecedented scale by way of indebtedness, financial markets and public credit. The devaluation shock on all levels of capital is now taking place right before our eyes. Now, however, it is less likely than ever before that there will be a regression to a zero point, on the basis of which the whole performance can begin again. To the contrary, the fundamental cause of the disaster is preserved, that is, the new standard of productivity irreversibly established by the third industrial revolution. Thus, all that is left is the repeated creation of new insubstantial money capital by the States and by the banks, capital that will repeatedly undergo collapse at increasingly shorter intervals.

Value critique is always confronted with the following objection: If there is no revolutionary class subject, a social group that by its nature is the bearer of consciousness, then what interests are there that lead to wanting a fundamentally human and truly historic society?

The concept of the subject is fundamentally paradoxical; it is a fetishistic concept. On the one hand, the subject is understood as an instance of autonomous thought and action. On the other hand, however, this same subject, precisely in its quality as a revolutionary class subject, must be conditioned in a purely objective way. It must "objectively" possess a "historical mission", regardless of whether or not its empirical bearers are aware of this. The alleged autonomy of thought and of action is itself belied if one accepts an unconscious pre-determination. It is as if radical critique were not an act of consciousness, free and non-determined, but rather a causally conditioned mechanism, like time or digestion. The function of consciousness would thus be only to consciously consume its own causality. This is, however, precisely the fetishistic determination of thought and of action in the domain of capital. If emancipation as a subject, even a conscious subject, must only take place like a natural or mechanical process, then it will be the opposite of itself. The blind mechanisms of capital can be objectively determined, but not liberation from its false objectivity; this liberation cannot once again become objective. Liberation is a historical fact and therefore cannot be theoretically "deduced" like the falling rate of profit. The famous "objective subject" of traditional Marxism is nothing but a category of capital itself, or a function of the "automatic subject" (Marx) of abstract labor and of value. There is no social group in capitalism that possesses a transcendent ontological pre-determination. All social groups are pre-formed by value and are therefore constituted in a capitalist way. When one speaks of "interests" it is necessary to make a distinction. There are, on the one hand, the vital interests of people, of material, social and cultural contents, which are identical to their historical needs. These contents are, on the other hand, bound up with the capitalist form. The real content of needs is thus perceived as secondary; only the capitalist interest, constituted under the form of money (wages and profits), is immediately perceived. It is, of course, inevitable that real needs or vital interests should be laid claim to first of all in the prevailing capitalist form. If, however, the difference between the content and the form is no longer perceived, this interest turns against its own bearers: this interest then becomes dependent, as a matter of life and death, on the continued functioning of the capital valorization process. One reduces oneself to an "objective subject" who surrenders his life to the laws of capital and considers this submission normal. It is important, however, to declare the real content of needs to be absolutely non-negotiable. Only then is there a chance to intensify the tension between the capitalist form and this content, and to go so far as to engage in the critique that transcends capital. This will not be the act of an "objective subject", but of human beings who only want to be human beings and nothing else. An emancipatory movement does not have any pre-conscious ontological basis, but, to the contrary, has to constitute itself by its own powers, "without a net and without training wheels".

A business, a hospital or a school is on strike. They are fighting to preserve their jobs, they are fighting against deteriorating working conditions and against wage cuts ... or else the workers are no longer fighting to preserve their jobs, but are threatening "to blow the whole thing sky-high" in order to receive decent severance packages (this has already happened several times in France). How should someone who sympathizes with value critique react to these events? What attitude should one assume towards the trade unions and the media?

Value critique is not simply opposed to social struggles that are immanent to capitalism. They are necessary starting points. Nevertheless, the question is to know what direction these struggles are taking. In this respect, their basis plays an important role. The trade unions are accustomed to presenting their demands not as derived from the needs of their members, but as so many contributions to improving the functioning of the system. Thus, they will say that higher wages are needed to strengthen the economy, and that they are possible because capital has high profits. Now, however, that capital valorization has obviously stagnated, this attitude is voluntarily transformed into a willingness to engage in the co-management of the crisis, to serve the "higher interest" of the entrepreneurial economy, of the laws of the market, of the nation, etc. This false consciousness exists not only among the trade union officials, but also among the so-called rank and file. If the wage workers identify with their own function in capitalism and demand what they need only in the name of this function, they transform themselves into "character masks" (Marx) of a particular component of capital, namely, labor power. Thus, they recognize that they only have the right to live if they can produce surplus-value. This gives rise to an embittered competition among the various categories of wage workers and a social-Darwinist ideology of exclusion. This is particularly evident in the defensive struggle for the preservation of jobs, which has no other perspective than the mere preservation of jobs. In this case there is often mutual competition for survival even between the employees of different branches of the same company. It is therefore essentially a good idea, and also much more realistic, besides, for the French workers to threaten to blow up the factories in order to force their employers to give them a reasonable severance package. These new forms of struggle are neither defensive nor positive, but can be combined with other

demands, such as, for example, higher unemployment insurance payments. To the extent that such social demands give rise to a social movement, the latter will also be confronted by the experience of its practical limits, if it will confront the questions of a new "categorical critique" of the fetishistic end-in-itself of capital and its social forms. The crystallization of this advanced perspective is the task of our theoretical elaboration, which does not exist in some abstract Beyond, but is understood as a moment of social debate.

For the anti-industrialists, emancipation from capitalism is synonymous with a return to an agrarian society (Kaczynski, "Encyclopédie des Nuisances", etc.). For the supporters of the "de-growth" movement (Décroissants), emancipation means leaving capitalism – but since they conceal the link between production and value, their critique does not go beyond a pure morality of renunciation in times of crisis. What is your idea of a post-capitalist society?

Marx already said, quite correctly, that abstract anti-industrialism is reactionary, because its judgments are arrived at outside of the potential of socialization and, like the apologists for capitalism, can only imagine a general context of social reproduction within the forms of capital. Anti-industrialism concludes that human self-determination can only be achieved at the price of "de-socialization", in small networks based on a subsistence economy (small is beautiful). The postulated return to agrarian reproduction is only the material aspect of this ideology. Instead of a widely diversified and interconnected division of functions we are supposed to engage in immediate "do it yourself" practices. This is an economic fantasy that constitutes an aspect of what Adorno called "false immediacy". Should such conditions become a reality, a large part of currently-existing humanity would have to starve. The critique of growth, which is just as abstract, which is today so fashionable and which advocates "simple commodity production" without the compulsion of growth, or substitutes for bourgeois contractual relations in small-scale cooperative contexts, is no better. What is called in Germany an "economy of solidarity" does not go beyond a hodgepodge of petty bourgeois ideas that have often failed historically and that, under the new crisis conditions, offer no perspective at all. Such ideas are a mere subterfuge. Their advocates do not want to enter into conflict with crisis management, but seek to cultivate their own imaginary idyll, "alongside" the real social synthesis carried out by capital. In practical terms, these proposals are completely irrelevant. They merely represent an ideology of "good intentions" on the part of disoriented leftists, who want to deceive themselves in capitalism in crisis and who run the risk of themselves becoming props for crisis management. The real question, to the contrary, is to liberate social reproduction from the fetish of capital and its basic forms. The potentials for socialization are determined in capitalism in a purely negative way, as the subjugation of human beings to the end-in-itself of valorization. Even the material side of production obeys this imperative of the "automatic subject" (Marx). Thus, the material content of industrial socialization cannot be positively overcome, but has to be abolished together with the fetishistic forms of capital. This affects not only the social relations of production, but also the relation with nature. It is therefore not a question of just taking over capitalist industry and its inherent productivism, without any discontinuity. An equally abstract "anti-productivism", however, or a return to an idyllic poverty in a subsistence economy and to a socially oppressive atmosphere of obscure "communities", is not an alternative, but only the other side of the capitalist coin. The task is therefore to revolutionize the material conditions of production themselves at a global social level and to assume meeting needs as the objective, as well as the preservation of the natural foundations of production. This means that there can be no more uncontrolled development that follows the general and abstract criterion of the so-called rationality of the entrepreneurial economy. The various moments of social reproduction must be considered in the context of the logic that pertains to their respective contents. For example, healthcare and education cannot be organized in accordance with the same standards applied to the production of punch presses or ball-bearings. The social infrastructures generally transcended the value form, as a result of "scientization". Even within industry itself, this logic of value must also be replaced, which transforms the productive forces into destructive forces, and thus deprives domains that are necessary for life of funding, due to a lack of "profitability". Thus, the mobility of persons must not be eliminated, or reduced to the level of donkey carts, but instead, by abolishing the destructive form of transport of the individual automobile, transformed into a qualitatively new network of public transportation. The "excrement of production" (Marx) cannot continue to be dumped on nature, instead of being integrated into the industrial circuit. And the capitalist "culture of the internal combustion engine" cannot be maintained; what is required is, to the contrary, a different use of fossil fuels. Finally, it is necessary for the moments of reproduction that are not susceptible to being embraced by value and by abstract labor, which were dissociated from official society and historically delegated to women (housework, companionship, childcare, etc.), to be organized in a consciously social form and disconnected from their gender-based anchorage. This broad diversification of industrial production and services, implemented in accordance with purely qualitative criteria, is something different from an abstract anti-industrialism; it does, however, demand the abolition of capitalist rationality, of synthesis by way of value and of the entrepreneurial economic calculation derived from it. This can only take place as a social process, by means of a social counter-movement on the part of society itself, rather than by way of pseudo-utopian "models" that need only be generalized. The post-capitalist society cannot be depicted in the form of a positive "model" that is provided in a completely ready-made form. Such a depiction would not constitute a concretization, but rather to the contrary, it would not amount to anything more than a pathetic abstraction and would be nothing but an anticipation of false objectivity, which is precisely what must be abolished. What theory can elaborate in the form of a critique of capitalist economism are the criteria of a different kind of socialization. This includes, above all, a conscious social planning with regard to resources, which must replace the blind dynamic of "the coercive laws of competition" (Marx). Social planning was discredited, even on the left, because its concept never went beyond the way it was understood in the defunct bureaucratic State socialism. That kind of socialism, however, did not constitute any kind of alternative to capitalism, but was essentially a "catch-up modernization" on the periphery of the world market, which made use of the mechanisms of the

capitalist State. The logic of value was not abolished, but merely nationalized. Critical consciousness could not endure under the conditions of the ongoing development of world capital that was not yet exhausted. It did not necessarily have to be that way, but it is a historical fact. It merely involved the participation of peripheral regions with equal rights in the world market, a participation that ended up as a failure. This formation therefore remains the prisoner of an aporia of the "planning of value", which by its very nature cannot be planned, but rather implies universal competition, under the dictates of abstract productivism. If negative socialization by way of value is today coming up against its historic limits on a world scale, a new paradigm of social planning is now called for, one that goes beyond the market and the State, beyond value and money.

Traditionally, the critique of capitalism was carried out from the point of view of labor. For you, capital and labor are not mutually contradictory. For you, capitalism is the society of labor. Why do you reject labor?

The clearly critical and negative concept of abstract labor in Marx can be determined as synonymous with the modern category of "labor". Under pre-modern conditions, sometimes this universal abstraction did not even exist, at other times it was negatively determined in a different way, that is, as the activity of dependants and subjects (slaves). "Labor" is not the same thing as production in general, or as the "process of metabolism with nature" (Marx), although Marx's terminology with regard to this question varied. It was capitalism that, for the first time, generalized and positively ideologized the negative category of "labor" and this led to the inflation of the concept of labor. The core of this generalization and false ontologization of "labor" is constituted by the historically unprecedented reduction of the process of production to a pure and simple expenditure of abstract human energy, or of "nerve, muscle and brain" (Marx), completely indifferent to its content. Socially, products "are sold" not as useful goods, but as representatives of past abstract labor. Its general expression is money. In this sense, in Marx abstract labor, or abstract human energy, constitutes the "substance" of capital. The fetishistic end-in-itself of valorization, of making two euros from one euro, is based on the end-in-itself of the uninterrupted increase of the expenditure of abstract labor, without taking needs into account. This absurd imperative, however, stands in contradiction with the constant increase of productivity, which is imposed by competition. The critique of capitalism from the point of view of labor is a logical impossibility, since you cannot criticize capital from the perspective of its own substance. The critique of capitalism has to be directed against this substance itself, liberating humanity from submission to compulsory abstract labor. Only then can this indifference with respect to the content of reproduction be overcome and that same content be taken seriously. If capital is understood in the most restricted sense, as money-capital and physical capital ("constant capital" in Marx), then there really is a functional contradiction between capital and labor. This contradiction involves different capitalist interests within a common system of reference. If, however, capital is understood in the most all-inclusive sense as in Marx, labor is only the other integral part of capital. Money-capital and physical capital represent "dead labor", while labor power ("variable capital" in Marx) represents "living labor". There are only different "states of aggregation" of abstract labor and therefore of capital. Understood in this way, the contradiction is "immanent" to global capital itself, or the "automatic subject", rather than a contradiction that points beyond capitalism. The old workers movement, insofar as it did not assume the position of liberating itself from abstract labor, but only the position of liberating that labor itself, was itself bound to be merely an integral part of capital and to find a dubious "recognition" only in this sense. As a result, in the socialism of the East, also known as State Capitalism, abstract labor was neither criticized nor abolished, but utilized by the bureaucracy as a fundamental category in its (unsuccessful) attempt to engage in technocratic planning. Today, in the third industrial revolution, capitalism is largely undermining its own substance of labor. In the balance sheets of the private corporations, labor no longer plays a decisive role as part of capital. Industrial production, and not just industrial production, is more influenced by the use of science and technology than by the use of direct productive human activity. The blind dynamic of capitalism surpasses in practice and reduces to absurdity the idea, already theoretically false, of a socialism based on "labor time" accounting. What must be planned in a post-capitalist society is not the quantity of human physical energy, but the meaningful and pragmatically diversified use of natural, technological and intellectual resources.

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